

# IS GOD A MORAL MONSTER?

## Part 1: An Ancient World

### Scripture References:

- Genesis 1-2
- Galatians 3:24-25
- Acts 17:30
- Romans 3:25

**Bottom Line:** In order to reconcile humanity, God had to engage with humanity where they were at, not where He wanted them to be.

### Summary:

This message is the first part of a series that tackles a tough and often uncomfortable question: "Is God a moral monster?" This question arises from some of the difficult and controversial passages found in the Old Testament, where God's actions or commands can seem harsh or contradictory to the loving nature of Jesus in the New Testament. The message aims to help listeners understand how to reconcile these seemingly conflicting depictions of God.

### Key Points:

#### 1. Introduction to the Series

- The speaker began by acknowledging the confusion and discomfort that many people feel when reading the Old Testament. The message addresses these concerns head-on, rather than avoiding or glossing over them.
- A satirical letter was used to highlight some of the difficult Old Testament laws, setting the tone for a discussion about how to make sense of them in the context of God's overall plan.

#### 2. Understanding the Tension:

- Many people struggle with the portrayal of God in the Old Testament compared to the image of Jesus in the New Testament. This tension often leads to questions like, "How can a loving God command such harsh laws or actions?"
- The message acknowledges that these concerns are valid and seeks to provide a framework for understanding them.

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### **3. The Role of Historical and Cultural Context:**

- The message emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context of the Ancient Near East (ANE), where the Old Testament was written.
- For example, what we often read as "slavery" in the Old Testament is better understood as "indentured servitude" within the specific cultural and economic conditions of that time. Unlike the brutal and dehumanizing slavery seen in other ancient cultures, this servitude in Israel was regulated and had safeguards to protect the rights and dignity of the servant.

### **4. God's Plan for Reconciliation:**

- The overarching theme of the Bible, as discussed in the message, is reconciliation. The Bible tells the story of God working through the messiness of human history to restore the relationship between Himself and humanity.
- Rather than imposing a perfect moral standard all at once, God chose to work within the cultural realities of the time to guide people towards a deeper understanding of justice, compassion, and ultimately, His love.

### **5. Key Takeaways**

- Just because something is described in the Old Testament doesn't mean God approved of it. The laws and stories in the Old Testament were part of a temporary and specific covenant with Israel, meant to guide them towards something better—namely, the coming of Jesus.
- The message encourages listeners not to let the difficult parts of the Old Testament cause them to miss the significance of Jesus, who fulfills and surpasses the old covenant with a new covenant based on faith and love.

### **6. Conclusion**

The message wraps up by inviting listeners to continue exploring these challenging questions. It acknowledges that while not all questions may be answered in this series, it is crucial to engage with them thoughtfully and to keep seeking understanding, especially in light of Jesus' life and teachings.

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## **Purpose of the Series:**

The series is designed to help believers and seekers alike navigate the difficult parts of the Bible, especially those in the Old Testament, without losing sight of the bigger picture of God's love and His plan for humanity. It provides tools and insights for understanding how God's engagement with humanity in ancient times fits into His overall plan of reconciliation through Jesus.